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## Effexor Side Effects: Insomnia

Last Updated: Jan 27, 2015 | By Nancy Fowler Larson



Effexor Side Effects: Insomnia Photo Credit Stockbyte/Stockbyte/Getty Images

Effexor, whose generic name is venlafaxine, can be an effective antidepressant but it may also have the annoying side effect of insomnia, or difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. A few lifestyle and nighttime alterations recommended for insomnia in general may help patients get a good night's sleep while on Effexor.

### Effexor and Insomnia

The insomnia caused by Effexor has not been thoroughly studied. But not only is insomnia itself a side effect of the medication, some of its other side effects can also interfere with sleep.

Nightmares, hot flashes, heartburn and

frequent urination can also prevent patients from getting the rest they need, so treating those particular issues may result in better rest.

Patients who are withdrawing from Effexor can face a further risk of insomnia.

### Nighttime Habits

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, a consistent bedtime routine can help someone go to sleep and stay asleep. The organization advises a warm bath, a light snack and 10 minutes of reading before turning in. The bedroom should be dark and quiet. A fan can create "white noise" that will block out other sounds.

Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day--even on weekends. At night, those who remain awake after 30 minutes of trying to get to sleep should leave the bedroom and go to another room for 20 minutes before returning to bed.

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## Daily Routines

During the day, eliminate or cut down on caffeinated beverages, alcohol, tobacco and decongestants. Get plenty of exercise, but not within several hours of bedtime. Try to reduce stress, and designate a certain time every day for worrying, to avoid mulling over troubles at night.

It's best to save the bedroom for sleep or sex and avoid other activities there, to make the room more conducive to falling asleep. Resisting the urge to take daytime naps will help sleep come more easily at night.

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## Behavioral Therapies

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a process by which a sleep therapist helps clients overcome insomnia. According to the Mayo Clinic, four to eight 30-minute CBT sessions usually produce good results. Patients may work with the sleep therapist on methods that include eliminating negative thoughts about sleep or at bedtime, reducing sleep hours, relaxation training and biofeedback (learning to control muscle tension and brain-wave frequency).

## Medication

Although patients should exhaust all lifestyle changes first, medications may be necessary to relieve some cases of insomnia. Many over-the-counter sleep aids contain diphenhydramine--the singular ingredient in the antihistamine Benadryl, which promotes drowsiness. Side effects can include daytime sleepiness and dizziness.

Prescription sleep medicines known as non-benzodiazepine hypnotics include zolpidem, better known as Ambien, which should only be taken immediately before seven to eight hours of sleep. Ramelteon, sold as Rozerem, is not habit-forming and is the only prescription sleep aid that is not a controlled substance. Alcohol increases these drugs' sedative properties.

Benzodiazepine hypnotics, developed in the 1960s for anxiety, are sometimes prescribed for sleep troubles, but can have severe side effects like facial swelling and respiratory problems.

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